

A visit with Nancy Oates

Town clerk has been in office for 26 years

By SHARON CRONIN, CLIPPER STAFF

Nancy Oates has been a fixture in Duxbury for quite some time. As the Town Clerk, she oversees elections, the town census, and all the vital statistics of Duxbury. When asked if we could visit with her, she jokingly said the people already know enough about her, but was still very happy to give us an interview.

How long have you lived in Duxbury? I have lived here almost 39 years, but have loved it since I was 12 years old. We would drive through from my home in Boston to vacation at White Horse Beach. I've always found Mayflower Cemetery to be beautiful enough to be a park! I brought up nine children here, all of whom graduated from Duxbury High and went on to Yale, Harvard, Cornell, Skidmore, Katherine Gibbs and Boston College. Three of them are actuaries, several in computers, two in health positions and some writers. What great schools we have in this town.

How long have you served as the Town Clerk? In 1983, shortly after my husband died, my good friend Bob Troy (our town attorney's father) convinced me to run. I won by four votes, and one of my first duties, ten days into the job, was to perform a recount for my own election. We did find one "hanging chad," so I actually only won by three votes!

What did you do before becoming the Town Clerk? I am a graduate of Framingham State with a degree in food and nutrition. I taught home economics for a while in Southborough and in Brookline. After marriage, I was a wife and mother and taught nursery school at my home in Duxbury for twelve years. When my husband died young of cancer in 1982, I knew I would have to do more. I was inspired by my mother, who started working after my father died, having never worked before. When Bob Troy told me I could win, I thought he meant the lottery, but he was talking about the election for Town Clerk! It was the best advice he could have given me.

What do you like best about the job? I've always been good at statistics, and math was my favorite subject in school, so I enjoy the vital statistics. Mostly, I love that this job is very challenging and there is something new all the time. I enjoy working with my new assistant town clerk, Susan Kelley. She's been in this position with me for six weeks, and we are really working well together. I also love working with all the people of Duxbury.



What do you like the least, or find the most challenging? I am very concerned that the Federal Census of 2010 will foul up precinct two and force me to make it larger. The town residents that have a Post Office Box do not get a government census. I feel this gives us an inaccurate count of residents. I plan on challenging this as the redistricting is done every ten years. Elections are also very challenging, as I stay at the polls the entire day, in case something goes wrong. This keeps us from having a court challenge.

How has the job changed over the years? The job is always changing, as new laws are passed. We've seen the most changes since September 11th, as it has affected vitals and election laws. But I find the ever changing aspect of the job is what keeps it so interesting.

What do you like to do in your spare time? I used to knit a lot, but I haven't been doing that much lately. I love to read and do crossword puzzles. My favorite books are mysteries, such as works by Jon Cleary, Clare Curzon, and Ann Granger and the Midsummer Mystery series on TV. I like watching comedies such as "Keeping up Appearances" and "Seinfeld." I really love to spend time with my family, and my 17 grandchildren.

Will you run again next term? Yes, I hope to! My license plate says "I am 18," but I'm getting closer to 19. I still love this position and plan to run again on March 27, 2010.